



K4MQG	Gary Dixon	President
K8YC	John Scott	Vice President
W4UNP	Bill Jennings	Sec./Treasurer
K4UEE	Bob Allphin	Chm, Board of Dir.
DJ9ZB	Franz Langner	Board of Dir.
JA3USA	Mac Shimamoto	Board of Dir.
N4AA	Carl Smith	Board of Dir.
W4NL	Lynn Lamb	Board of Dir.
W9RG	Richard Grant	Board of Dir.

INDEXA

Spring 2011

www.indexa.org

Issue 93

A non-profit organization for the enhancement of amateur radio,
worldwide peace, and friendship

Daily Information Session — 14.236 MHz @ 23:30z

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT

By Alfeo Caputo (I1HJT) and Silvano Borsa (I2YSB)

The call of Africa is strong for us. After the previous expeditions to Niger, Somalia, Djibouti, Sierra Leone and Ghana, this year we decided to land in Togo. Why has Africa, and more precisely the West coast, been our target in the last years? What we are looking for when targeting a country is the load of adrenaline pushing on us the moment we switch the radio on. We are immediately submerged by huge pile-up. Then we try to go as fast as we can to catch the letters of a call despite the strong static noises com-



The 5V7TT Team takes a few minutes from operating to grab a lakeside photo opportunity—then back to work.

ing from an imminent storm or when, defenseless, we swear at a sudden, yet usual, electric energy black out. Africa generously spreads those feelings. Africa's West coast is in a lucky position, mostly when the solar activity is low, as Europe is to the North, USA to the North-West, Oriental Europe, Asiatic Russia and Japan are to the North-East, and West Africa is at the edge of this triangle.

The aircraft had just taken off from Ghana one year ago, and we were already wondering where the next DXpedition would take us. This is the way we are: Our ears are still tired and buzzing after two hyperactive weeks, we are still feeling the effects of sleep deprivation, and we are already dreaming of our next destination! Once back home we immediately started the usual research activity, the "most wanted" countries ranking analysis, the search for sites, presence of islands, together with the study on the propagation, forecasts about the solar spots and so on. The first destination we considered was Gabon, a target on which we spent some

(Continued on page 2)

inside...

Take a look at the redesigned INDEXA Flag

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

(Continued from page 1)

efforts before having to give up because of some unfavorable conditions. It was May 2010 and the first six months of the year had passed without results. We got in touch with Franco, I1FQH, who was in Togo last year and he was planning to get back there in July. Thanks to him we found good contacts in Lomè and we could get all the necessary information to obtain the licenses. Togo looked promising. Unfortunately there are no islands in the sea of Togo to also provide IOTA interest, but, on the other hand, it would make us freer to select the site for our activity.

Togo was well down the list of the “most-wanted” but it could still spur interest on the higher bands if the improving solar conditions would only cooperate. Our search for an operating location finally identified a site on the beach, just on the outskirts of Lomè. We contacted the resort manager and everything was looking positive. Even Franco, who was in Togo operating as 5V7DX, went to visit the site and he sent us some pictures. After exchanging many mails and telephone calls, we received the communication that our booking had been refused. Coco, one of Franco’s friends in Togo, went to talk to the resort’s owner to learn the reason for the refusal. The resort was concerned about our activity—they were afraid we would attract the curiosity of some police authority and, therefore, generate problems for the resort.

It was nearly the end of July and it was necessary to look for an alternative site. Stefano found another resort on the Togo Lake beach, not far from Togoville, the former country capital thirty kilometres from Lomè. Unfortunately, the place was in a low definition area on Google Earth, so we had no alternative but to count on our lucky star as to what we’d find on arrival.

Now we faced the inevitable weight allocation issues in transporting all our gear to the DXpedition site. Silvano performed a miracle in packing three fully equipped stations into 12 parcels, two for each of us, which weighed less than 23 kg. The PCs and the personal belongings would be carried in our hand luggage, trying not to exceed 10 kg. The three stations were equipped with the well tested K3, two Acom 1000 linear amplifiers, a solid state amplifier producing 500 watts, and two Spiderbeams (one up-graded for the 30m band). Finally, two verticals 40-80m and an inverted “L” for 160m completed our

“kit”. We chose to avoid all aluminum antennas, apart from the small and light 7 band vertical, which has been following us for years, finding that glass fibre is much lighter and of sufficient strength for DXpeditioning.



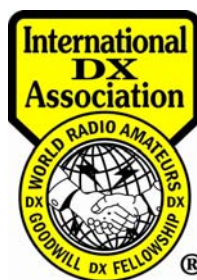
Several years of going on DXpeditions allows us to develop a masterful packing scheme that satisfies airline requirements.

For the low bands we decided to test some different solutions to validate some comments found on the net. We chose a “diamond” already used in Ghana one year ago. Also with us was a DHDL, a double loop, and a roll of 200m of wire to build a “beverage” thanks to the last minute insistence of Vinicio. We

(Continued on page 3)

The *INDEXA Newsletter* is a quarterly publication of the International DX Association.

Copyright 2011



Editor & Publisher

John Scott, K8YC; 16212 Walcot Lane
Cornelius, NC 28031 USA
jascott@mi-connection.com

Distribution & Circulation

Bill Jennings, W4UNP; P. O. Box 123
Catawba, SC 29704 USA
w4unp@comporium.net

Send change-of-address information and membership applications to Secretary-Treasurer, Bill Jennings, W4UNP.

Address general correspondence to President Gary Dixon, K4MQG, at
gdixon@comporium.net.

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

(Continued from page 2)

were not sure of being able to find enough room to lay a “beverage”, but we were ready, space permitting.

Obtaining the license in these countries is never easy and simple: there are verbal promises, but rarely is this followed by the needed action. Franco and his friends in Lomè went to the cognizant bureau several times and acquired written documentation before our departure, including a precious declaration from the Communication Authority stating that the equipment to be carried by us was dedicated for authorized operations. Such declaration is extremely important as it makes import and export Customs operation upon arrival and departure more trouble free.

Finally, the departure day arrived and on Saturday 24th of October in the afternoon we were at Malpensa airport ready with all of our luggage. At the check-in we met the first obstacle, discovering that for some unknown reason according to the Royal Air Maroc computer system the itinerary for Marcello, Angelo and Vinicio ended in Cotonou, Benin, the airport where the flight lands before the final jump to Lomè, Togo. This, despite the original booking being done to Lomè. After several unsuccessful attempts of the check-in employee, we could not find a solution other than to depart and try to solve the problem in Casablanca, during our layover there. Thankfully, we easily got the proper boarding at the Casablanca transit desk.

Togo is just 4000 km from Italy but we landed in Lomè 12 hours later, at 0330Z the morning after because of the many stops along the way. After collecting our luggage, the first obstacle was the Customs. Coco and the uncle of Don Lorenzo (who is a priest from Togo living in Northern Italy) were already waiting to help us, but the customs officer required us to wait until his supervisor came later in the morning. As a replay of a scene from one year ago in Ghana, after a long negotiation and disclosure of the declaration issued by the Telecommunication Authority we were allowed to leave the terminal with our equipment (after leaving a 400 Euro security deposit) but we had to promise to return and talk with the chief officer on the following day.

The hotel minibus was waiting for us and after stuffing the luggage in, we split between the minibus and

Coco's car. We reached the resort after one hour driving. Once we got there we realized that we were lucky in our choice, as the site was nice, and the rooms were comfortable and clean. The resort consisted in an array of little bungalows, 22 rooms in total, just in front of the lake. We had booked four twin bed rooms, at the two ends of the array. The SSB station was alone at the Northern side, the CW and RTTY at the Southern side.

We started straight away to install the first station and the relevant antennas to have signals in the ether as soon as possible. At 1208Z the first QSO on 18MHz CW with EA7KJ was in the log. While the first station was operating, we started setting up the second one, but right at the final step of the Spiderbeam installation a violent storm forced us to complete the mast anchorage in a downpour. At the end we were soaked to the skin. African weather had just welcomed us!

Our frenetic activity of installing antennas and laying wires created a certain concern among the hotel personnel and the few guests. Nevertheless, their curiosity seemed to be satisfied with a few replies to their questions. The resort was nearly deserted during the weekdays, but it got lively on the weekends, mostly when a Sunday brunch was offered. The restaurant owns the reputation of being one of the best ones in Lomè and this sometimes attracted guests even during the weekdays. We were not annoyed by the lack of guests—this way we were not obliged to reply all the time to their questions and we were free to move at nighttime.

The climate is rather hot and wet this time of the year, and it is pleasant to have a bath every now and then. Unfortunately the water in the lake was not clean enough and we were advised against swimming in this freshwater lake. The sea is not far, just a couple of kilometers, but the known riptides strongly discouraged us from going into the water. Luckily there was a swimming pool at the resort, where we often had a bath.

Luckily enough, we never met wild or dangerous animals, even when we were obliged to walk in the grass where the Spiderbeam was installed, to turn it towards Europe, to USA or to Japan long path. The grass was knee-high and full of nettles but, in spite of us wearing just sandals, we did not have any ac-

(Continued on page 4)

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

(Continued from page 3)

cidents because we moved with great care! The only wild animals we saw were a couple of crocodiles kept in the resort as an attraction in a concrete basin protected by metallic fencing. They were absolutely motionless for all the time of our visit, and it made us a little sad thinking about them forced to spend their life in such captivity.



Though we were warned about swimming in the lake, we did find it useful for a little relaxation as time permitted.

After having organized several DXpeditions in the past few years, we have developed a remarkable skill in our set ups, trying always to improve our efficiency and to exploit to the best the propagation opening in the various bands, mostly the highest ones, even when it is not favorable.

We have found it worthwhile to have all stations linked by a network, as this allows continuously monitoring the bands on which the stations are active and to notify other operators of band openings. This facility is available in the N1MM package and we built a dedicated wi-fi network to communicate between the logging computers.

A serious handicap of the resort, which we were aware of, was the absence of an Internet connection. We know how important Internet connectivity is to a DXpedition. Therefore once we got on site, we immediately began to try and find a solution to the problem. With the assistance of Coco and his car driver, Alfeo wandered for two days in the capital,

visiting the offices of the two mobile telephone providers to find a solution—a USB key with GPRS “flat” access, pretty slow, but very expensive. More than 300 Euro for two weeks! Unfortunately it was the only option available, and we were obliged to accept this extortion. Yet, for the DX hunter, having access to the DXpedition log on-line permits verification that a QSO is properly recorded. By checking the log on-line, the DXer can avoid repeating the QSO for “insurance”. Normally the log online updating is made daily or more often in case a good net connection is available. Just a few years ago, during our expedition to Mucha Island close to Djibouti, to update the log online we were obliged to sail to the mainland and to upload the files at an Internet café. Although our Internet connection in Togo was very slow, we were able to update the log automatically every 5 minutes. Giacomo, IH9GPI, worked the wonder—he wrote software to consolidate the log generated by N1MM and upload it to the 5V7TT web page. The system worked perfectly. Nevertheless, it was not enough to avoid making double QSOs, and at the end of our expedition we counted more than 2,000 double QSOs, definitely far too many in relation to the efforts we took to keep the log regularly updated on-line.

Once the station set up was accomplished the operations started full steam. Even though the 5V country was not high in the “most wanted” ranking, the pileups were huge, well above our own optimistic expectations. The low bands were rather noisy and due to that we did not make a big QSO count on 80 meter and 160 meters in spite of our efforts.

In our antenna “research”, we can affirm that the Beverage headed to the north was better than all the others. The DHDL, headed to USA, proved to be surprisingly efficient on 80m but on 160m it did not perform as well as the Beverage. The “diamond”, compared to the others, revealed itself to be deaf.

The resort bungalows were oriented North/South and this obliged us to erect the beams antennas one behind the other and, even though the distance between them was approximately 100 meters, this alignment was the source of some mutual interferences on some bands. We enjoyed a great advantage by being just in front of a large water surface, which acted as a reflector toward North and West.

(Continued on page 5)

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

(Continued from page 4)

To exploit the water's surface, we installed the small 7 band vertical at the lake's edge and we achieved significant results—more than 9,000 QSOs working CW and RTTY, most of them barefoot with just 100W.



Even “planting” an antenna in fresh water apparently provides good results.

Lack of reliability of the electric energy supply seems to be a constant reality in Africa and almost every day we suffered one or more power shut offs lasting for a few minutes to several hours. In addition to that, the weather provided us with heavy rain and the related static noise almost daily.

A big 100KVA diesel power generator was available in the resort to supply the electric energy during the network power failures. The generator startup was manual and, in spite of our several requests, we were never informed in advance when it was going to be started or stopped during transitions back to commercial power. In practice, with each power failure we got two power shut offs.

On the Friday night in the middle of our DXpedition, we were hit by gusts of a tropical storm with heavy rain and strong wind. To our luck, with the first light of sunrise we realized that our antennas had not suffered any damage, apart from the 7 band vertical, which fell into the water due to a broken guy rope. As the water of the lake is not salty, it was sufficient to recover the antenna, dismantle the traps and the balun, and dry them all under the sun. Yet, this tropi-

cal storm created many problems in the power network and the electricity shut down during night time. The generator was started, but it stopped 4 hours later. Without power we were completely inactive, waiting for a service engineer to come from Lomé. After some time he found a damaged fuel pump, then he had to return to Lomé to get the spare part. It was late afternoon when the generator was ready, exactly when the power from the main net became available again. We were limited to only 8 hours of operation on this day.

We already had experience of how ruinous to our rigs unexpected power failures can be and we saw that happen on this DXpedition, too. We did not have problems with the K3, as happened in Ghana one year ago, but we did experience some problems with the linear amplifiers. One of the Acom amplifiers, after a repeated power failures, stopped working. Nothing happened even after we replaced the electronic tube and the antenna vacuum relay—the most sensitive parts and for which we had spares. This happened on Sunday and the diagnosis made by the Acom Customers' service, to whom we spoke on the following morning, was hopeless—in addition to the electronic tube, a control board was damaged and it could not be repaired in the field. The broken amplifier sadly went back into its box and the solid state amplifier was moved to the SSB station. But this one too had some problems, as something was not working properly in the band filter switching. In certain situations, it generated spurious signals and splatters interfering heavily with the other stations, so that we often were forced to cease using it.

It would have been logical to expect that the losses of our amplifiers would have heavily hindered our operations, but to our great astonishment we continued to enjoy very fast and huge pile-ups both in SSB and CW with Europe, USA and Japan. The received reports were really enthusiastic, our signals were always strong enough and all this drove us to reconsider the real necessity to carry along such big and heavy amplifiers, when using just 100W allowed us to achieve those performances.

Our stay was quiet and safe inside the resort fence, protected and surveyed by guards. But life outside

(Continued on page 6)

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

(Continued from page 5)

is a different thing. Togo is a very poor country, and the standard of living is quite low. To those of us who went outside the resort, we found the living conditions to be precarious. They were only slightly mitigated by the efforts of lay and/or religious missionaries, many of them Italian and some of whom we met.

Watching the lake we could see the pirogues fully loaded with passengers, propelled with long wooden oars, a number of tired fishermen busy for the whole day dropping the nets into the water to get a few kilos of tiny fish or some crabs, and others stood waist deep in the water fishing with rudimentary wooden poles.

There are some big and representative buildings, mostly belonging to the government, in the capital Lomè, and the majority of the population—approximately one million of the 6.5 million Togo inhabitants—lives in the capital in low and precarious buildings. The traffic is chaotic, especially during rush time, and there are plenty of small motorbikes, often loaded beyond imagination. Togo's economy is based on agriculture, export of cacao and extraction of phosphate, of which Togo is one the major world producers.

The day of the completion of our operations arrived. Our flight was due to leave at 04:30 Sunday morning but we agreed with the resort management to leave on the afternoon before, because the drivers refuse to drive at night time when it can be quite dangerous. Our plan was to spend the night inside the airport. At 1300Z on Saturday 24th we recorded the last QSO. Then we started to dismantle the three stations and to pack all our equipment. It was a nice surprise for us when Coco, his sister Sister Giannina and Don Lorenzo's uncle, offered to accompany us to help with the Customs operation and to wait together with us until departure time.

Lomè airport is not really crowded. There are just a few aircraft landings and takeoffs during the day, and therefore it was almost empty. Luckily the Customs office was open and, by waking up a pair of officers, we could clear our luggage/equipment and get back the security deposit they levied upon us at our arrival. Anyhow we could not refuse an "Italian gift" for them, which means a tip in Euro, which they expressly asked for. On the other hand we were allowed to drop our gear into a Customs office, leaving

us free to go out with Coco and company, and then to get back to the airport 3 hours before departure for the check in.

Stuffed into two cars, Coco and his companions together with the six of us started for a Lomè-by-night tour. We immediately got the impression that not one of the million inhabitants living in Lomè remained at home that night—the streets were overcrowded and noisy. It was a sort of "beer festival" and outside the sheds an enormous quantity of motorbikes and cars were parked. A merry crowd was walking on the streets, sitting in the outdoor "bars" drinking, singing, and howling to the full volume of deafening music being broadcast everywhere.

The "bars" are nothing but wooden or sheet metal covered sheds with wooden desks and benches on the raw earth. The hygiene is superficial, the noise is hellish. We were observed with curiosity, as it is not usual to see a group of six white-skinned fellows walking around. Nevertheless we never had the impression of being unsafe. No one showed signs of hostility or aggressiveness toward us—on the contrary, often somebody greeted us calling some soccer player's name or the name of some Italian team! After having paid a visit to a couple of those "bars" it was time to get back to the airport, where we could easily collect our luggage and check in, waiting to embark into the aircraft.

But our adventure was not yet finished. A further surprise was waiting for us—we were intimidated by a security officer for a further check on some of our luggage as the X-ray screening showed something suspicious. It was the amplifier transformers, which we separated from the rig and packed in a separate box to optimize the weight. It was easy to clarify the situation but soon we discovered that the real reason for all this was to get another "Italian gift" from us.

At 1600 of Sunday, the Royal Air Maroc plane landed in Malpensa, and the cold weather of Milan welcomed us. We can be proud for the over 55,000 QSOs made largely with handicapped equipment, a result that is much better than we expected before our departure. Some other important DXpeditions were on the air in the same time as ours. The Netherlands Antilles dissolution had just created four new entities on the air together with us. We would have

(Continued on page 7)

The Lure of Africa—Togo, 5V7TT (con'd)

expected to face big problems to share the bands and to overlap the respective pileups. Actually, it did not happen. We managed the operations without suffering problems and without creating problems for others.

Finally, some statistics:

Total QSOs	55,604
Net QSO (without dupes)	53,500
Unique call	19,984
USA	9,930
Italy	7,060
Germany	5,380
Japan	3,400
Spain	3,300
Russia	3,000
French	1,800

Further data are available by visiting our web page www.i2ysb.com

A special thank goes to all the sponsors, once again numerous, and to all the friends who supported us in our effort.

--73 es Gud DX, *Alfeo* and *Silvano*

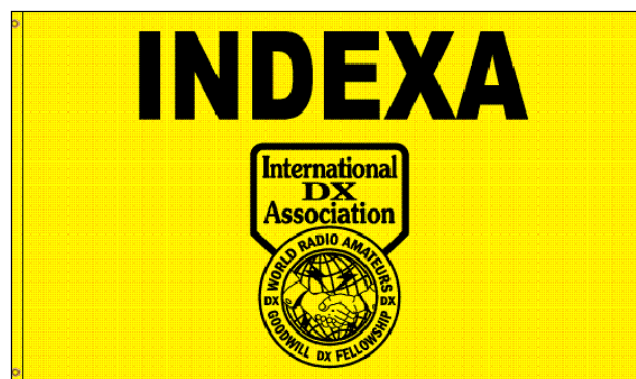
INDEXA Gets a New Flag

INDEXA provides a flag to all DXpeditions to display when the operation is underway. We ask that the flag be returned. If the DXpedition team wants the flag as a memento of the event, we ask that the DXpedition defray the cost of the flag. We found our supply of flags was nearly gone in early 2011 so we set about to get a new flag which proudly shows the INDEXA logo.

Below is a representation of the new flag. We hope you find it pleasing.

Look for it in upcoming DXpeditions.

—The Editor



THE QSL MAN® - W4MPY

Wayne Carroll
P. O. Box 73
Monetta, SC 29105
Phone/FAX (803) 685-7117
Web: www.qslman.com



WWW.DAILYDX.COM

ProLog

Since 1991, ProLog has been the logging program of choice. For a features list, screenshots, reviews, user comments and secure ordering, visit us at:

WWW.PROLOG2K.COM

Datamatrix 5560 Jackson Loop, NE Rio Rancho NM 87124
Orders Only Please: 1-800-373-6564 Info: 1-505-892-5669

Exciting DXpedition Videos!

Own six professionally-produced DVDs from TWELVE great adventures!



Flash!

Desecheo K5D DVD available now!

www.k4uee.com/dvd

Great for gifts, club meetings and introducing newcomers to DX!

INDEXA POB 123 · Catawba, SC · 29704 · USA

The International DX Association

Annual Membership: \$20 U.S.

Support DX, participate in daily DX Info Session, receive quarterly INDEXA newsletter

www.indexa.org



Since 1989

QRZ DX Newsletter
Available each week by Regular Mail; Or, by email as a PDF file with Special Bulletins on late breaking DX news.



Since 1979

Six times a year, **The DX Magazine** Brings you stories about DXpeditions by those who were there and much more.

DX Publishing, Inc.
PO Box DX; Leicester, NC 28748
www.dxpub.com

DX World Guide by Franz Langner, DJ9ZB

ARRL Product Catalog: www.arrl.org/shop—\$25 + S/H (US)
1-888-277-5289 (US) 860-594-0335 (non-US)